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FreeRealms™

#5 MAR 10

Exclusive In-Game Reward Inside! Collect all 12. See page 28 for details on collecting the LIGHTNING FEET

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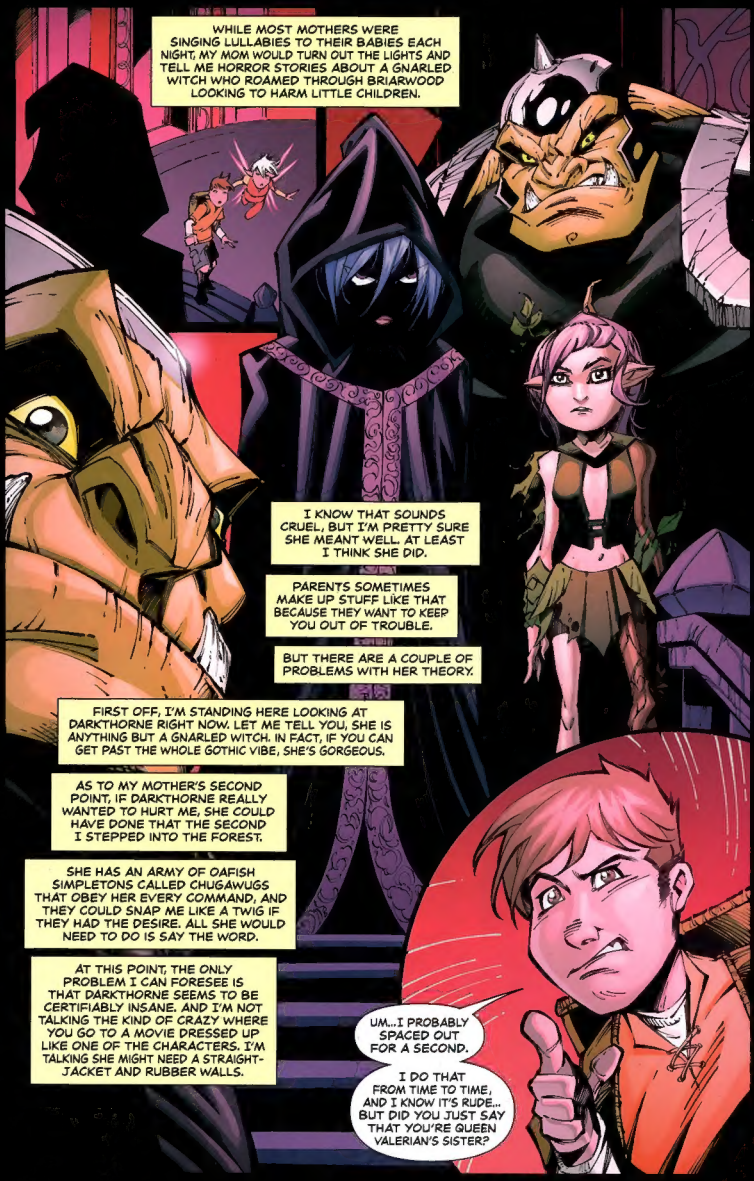
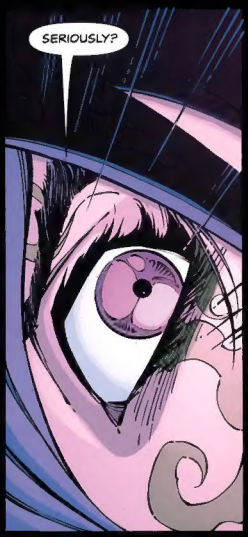

WHILE MOST MOTHERS WERE SINGING LULLABIES TO THEIR BABIES EACH NIGHT, MY MOM WOULD TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND TELL ME HORROR STORIES ABOUT A GNARLED WITCH WHO ROAMED THROUGH BRIARWOOD LOOKING TO HARM LITTLE CHILDREN.
I KNOW THAT SOUNDS CRUEL, BUT I'M PRETTY SURE SHE MEANT WELL. AT LEAST I THINK SHE DID.
PARENTS SOMETIMES MAKE UP STUFF LIKE THAT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO KEEP YOU OUT OF TROUBLE.
BUT THERE ARE A COUPLE OF PROBLEMS WITH HER THEORY.
FIRST OFF, I'M STANDING HERE LOOKING AT DARKTHORNE RIGHT NOW. LET ME TELL YOU, SHE IS ANYTHING BUT A GNARLED WITCH. IN FACT, IF YOU CAN GET PAST THE WHOLE GOTHIC VIBE, SHE'S GORGEOUS.
AS TO MY MOTHER'S SECOND POINT, IF DARKTHORNE REALLY WANTED TO HURT ME, SHE COULD HAVE DONE THAT THE SECOND I STEPPED INTO THE FOREST.
SHE HAS AN ARMY OF OAFISH SIMPLETONS CALLED CHUGAWUGS THAT OBEY HER EVERY COMMAND, AND THEY COULD SNAP ME LIKE A TWIG IF THEY HAD THE DESIRE. ALL SHE WOULD NEED TO DO IS SAY THE WORD.
AT THIS POINT, THE ONLY PROBLEM I CAN FORESEE IS THAT DARKTHORNE SEEMS TO BE CERTIFIABLY INSANE. AND I'M NOT TALKING THE KIND OF CRAZY WHERE YOU GO TO A MOVIE DRESSED UP LIKE ONE OF THE CHARACTERS. I'M TALKING SHE MIGHT NEED A STRAIGHT-JACKET AND RUBBER WALLS.
UM...I PROBABLY SPACED OUT FOR A SECOND.
I DO THAT FROM TIME TO TIME, AND I KNOW IT'S RUDE... BUT DID YOU JUST SAY THAT YOU'RE QUEEN VALERIAN'S SISTER?

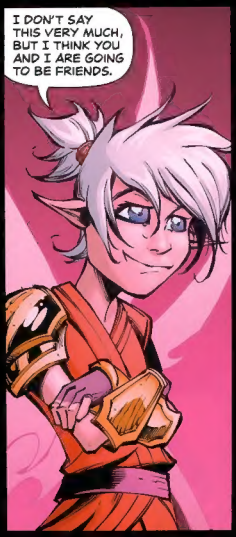
DARKTHORNE... YOU MUSTN'T!
LOOK, I'M A SUCKER FOR A GOOD CONSPIRACY THEORY, SO LET ME LAY THIS ON YOU TO SEE WHAT YOU THINK.
WILL YOU BE QUIET?
WHAT? EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT THE RUMOR.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW?
YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN TO STOP, DO YOU?
EVERYBODY THINKS THAT YOU KILLED QUEEN VALERIAN'S SISTER.

I MEAN, I'M SURE IT WAS SELF-DEFENSE AND EVERYTHING...
Enter the MAD Man
WRITTEN BY J.S. LEWIS
PENCILLED BY OLIVER NOME
INKED BY OLIVER NOME & ALLEN MARTINEZ
COLORED BY BILL CRABTREE
LETTERED BY JOHNNY LOWE
...I'M GOING TO GO AHEAD AND SHUT MY MOUTH NOW, BUT BEFORE I DO, I'D LIKE TO CALL UPON THE MERCY OF THE COURT...
COVER BY JON BURAN
ASSISTANT EDITED BY MICHAEL MCCALISTER
EDITED BY SHANNON ERIC DENTON
THIS IS NOT A COURTROOM, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, I AM NOT A MONSTER. I NO MORE KILLED THE QUEEN'S SISTER THAN YOU DID.
I HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO, BUT I TOLD YOU SO.
UMM... A LITTLE HELP?
SORRY HOTSHOT, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN WITH THIS ONE.

LOOK, BEFORE YOU THROW ME IN THE DUNGEON OR TURN ME INTO A TOAD, I'D JUST LIKE TO SAY THAT I'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A RARE DISEASE CALLED DIARRHEA OF THE MOUTH. I CAN'T ALWAYS CONTROL WHAT I SAY. I MEAN, JUST THE OTHER DAY...
ENOUGH!
CAN YOU TEACH ME HOW TO DO THAT?

PERHAPS, BUT FIRST I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THE QUEEN.
WHAT HAPPENED?
MMM MM MMMM MMMM MMMM!
WHAT HE'S TRYING TO SAY IS THAT WE DON'T REALLY KNOW.
DANE WON A KART RACE, AND THE PRIZE WAS DINNER WITH VALERIAN.
HE FANCIES HIMSELF AS SOME KIND OF TEEN HEARTTHROB, AND IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT, DANE ACTUALLY THOUGHT THAT THE QUEEN WAS GOING TO THROW HERSELF AT HIM.


SERIOUSLY?


I DON'T SAY THIS VERY MUCH, BUT I THINK YOU AND I ARE GOING TO BE FRIENDS.

ANYWAY, WHEN CASSANOVA WAS ABOUT TO MAKE HIS MOVE, VALERIAN STARTED COUGHING UNCONTROLLABLY. THEN AN ARMY OF SERVANTS RUSHED INTO THE ROOM, AND GEOFFREY TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVES SOMEONE HAD POISONED THE QUEEN.

HE WILL PAY.

WAIT A MINUTE. WHO'S GOING TO PAY? BECAUSE IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ME, I JUST WANT TO SAY THAT I'M COMPLETELY AND ONE HUNDRED PERCENT INNOCENT.
SHE'S TALKING ABOUT GEOFFREY.
HUH?
ARE ALL BOYS THIS DENSE, OR IS IT JUST YOU?
I DON'T GET IT. GEOFFREY IS THE ONE WHO SENT US HERE TO TAKE THE POTION THAT YOUR CHUGAWUGGS HIJACKED.
HE SAID THAT IT WAS GOING TO CURE QUEEN VALERIAN, SO WHY WOULD HE TRY TO POISON HER?
BECAUSE HE WANTS THE THRONE.

I MUST BE MISSING SOMETHING HERE.
THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME.
KORG, WOULD YOU BE A DEAR AND BRING ME THE BOX?
THE PRETTY ONE WITH ALL THE SHINY ROCKS ON IT?
YES, PLEASE.
I'M NOT THE VILLAIN THAT GEOFFREY WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE I AM.
THEN WHAT'S WITH ALL THE MAN-EATING PLANTS, GIANT SPIDERS, AND THE CHUGAWUG ARMY?
DO YOU RECALL THE DAY THAT THE QUEEN'S PARENTS WERE MURDERED?
KIND OF, BUT I WAS JUST A KID.
I DIDN'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE NEWS BACK THEN.
I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE.
THERE WAS NO SIGN OF A BREAK-IN OR A STRUGGLE OF ANY KIND. THE GUARDS DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING UNUSUAL. AND THE ONLY PERSON SEEN GOING IN OR OUT OF THEIR SUITE THAT NIGHT WAS GEOFFREY.
BUT HE WAS THEIR PERSONAL ADVISOR, SO IT MAKES SENSE, RIGHT?
THE CORONER'S REPORT SHOWED TRACES OF POISON IN THEIR BLOOD STREAM. WHO COULD HAVE POISONED THEM OTHER THAN GEOFFREY?

DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT DO YOU BELIEVE IN UFOS AND ALL THAT STUFF?
OF COURSE NOT!
REALLY? BECAUSE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS KIND OF OUT THERE.
WHOOOOOOSSSSHHH!
I... CAN'T... BREATHE...
YOU WILL NOT BE DISRESPECTFUL TO DARKTHORNE IN HER OWN FORTRESS!

HELP...
...MAYBE WE CAN STRIKE A DEAL.
ANYTHING...
THANK YOU, KORG.
CLICK

THIS IS THE VIAL THAT CAPTAIN CHUGUG TOOK FROM THE TRESPASSERS. UNFORTUNATELY GEOFFREY AND I HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT DEFINITION OF MEDICINE.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IT SHOULD HEAL PEOPLE.

APPARENTLY GEOFFREY THINKS OTHERWISE.
PLEASE RELEASE OUR GUEST, GORG.

YES, DARKTHORNE.

HERE. SMELL THIS.
NO, THAT'S OKAY. I BELIEVE YOU.
I INSIST.

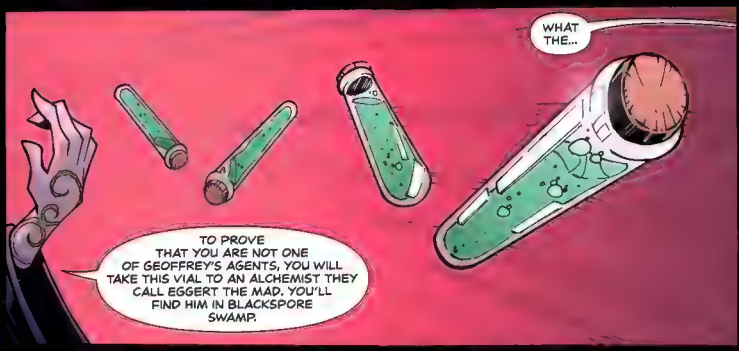
WHAT IN THE HECK IS THAT STUFF?
IT SMELLS LIKE THE BATHROOM AFTER MY UNCLE GETS DONE DOING HIS BUSINESS.
I THINK I'M GOING TO THROW UP.

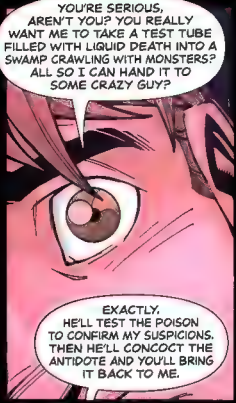
A SINGLE DROP OF THE LIQUID INSIDE THIS VIAL WOULD EAT THROUGH THE WALLS OF YOUR STOMACH.
DANE SAID THAT VALERIAN WAS COUGHING UP BLOOD.
GEOFFREY MUST HAVE BEEN PUTTING THE POISON INTO THE QUEEN'S DRINKS.
OVER TIME, IT WOULD DEVOUR HER ORGANS AND DESTROY HER FROM THE INSIDE OUT. AND SINCE SHE DOESN'T HAVE AN HEIR, HE WOULD BE NEXT IN LINE TO TAKE THE THRONE.
THEN WHY WAS HE TRYING TO POISON YOU?
HAVE YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO ANYTHING? THE QUEEN'S SISTER WASN'T MURDERED, DANE. SHE'S STANDING RIGHT HERE.
THEN YOU REALLY ARE...
MY TRUE NAME IS *LAVENDAR*, AND YES, I AM QUEEN VALERIAN'S SISTER.

I'M SPEECHLESS.
THAT'S A FIRST.
AFTER GEOFFREY KILLED OUR PARENTS, HE BLAMED EVERYTHING ON THE CHUGAWUGS. HE CLAIMED THEY HAD FAILED IN THEIR DUTY TO PROTECT THE CROWN, SO HE HAD THEM EXILED.
MY SISTER WAS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE GEOFFREY'S LIES, BUT NOT ME. I KNEW THAT GEOFFREY HAD KILLED THEM. HOW WERE THE CHUGAWUGS SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT THE KING AND QUEEN'S ADVISOR WAS POISONING THEM?
BUT IF YOU KNEW THE TRUTH, WHY DID YOU LEAVE?
BECAUSE GEOFFREY TURNED MY SISTER AGAINST ME.
THAT'S TERRIBLE.
AS MUCH AS I LOVE VALERIAN, I HAD TO LEAVE.
I TOOK THE POOR CHUGAWUGS WITH ME, AND WE STARTED A NEW LIFE TOGETHER.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR MY SISTER TO COME TO HER SENSES, BUT IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE. I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT.
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF. THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD DO.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU TWO ARE TALKING LIKE THE QUEEN IS ALREADY DEAD.
INSTEAD OF SITTING AROUND HERE MOPING, WHY DON'T WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
I MEAN, THERE HAS TO BE AN ANTIDOTE OR SOMETHING.

YES... OF COURSE THERE IS.
AND?

GRRRRRRR!


WHAT THE...
TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE NOT ONE OF GEOFFREY'S AGENTS, YOU WILL TAKE THIS VIAL TO AN ALCHEMIST THEY CALL EGGERT THE MAD. YOU'LL FIND HIM IN BLACKSPORE SWAMP.


YOU'RE SERIOUS, AREN'T YOU? YOU REALLY WANT ME TO TAKE A TEST TUBE FILLED WITH LIQUID DEATH INTO A SWAMP CRAWLING WITH MONSTERS? ALL SO I CAN HAND IT TO SOME CRAZY GUY?
EXACTLY. HE'LL TEST THE POISON TO CONFIRM MY SUSPICIONS. THEN HE'LL CONCOCT THE ANTIDOTE AND YOU'LL BRING IT BACK TO ME.

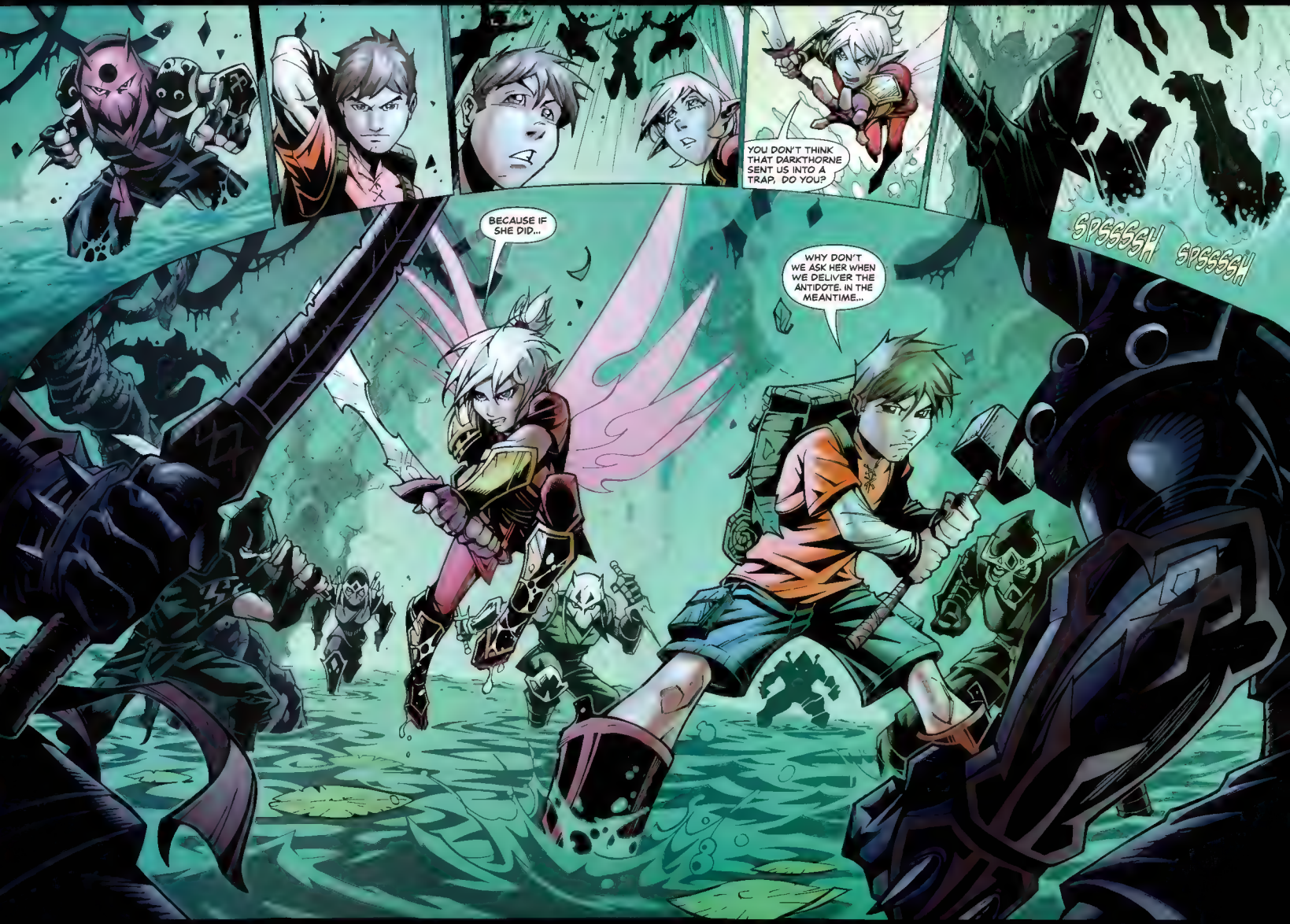
AND IF I REFUSE?
I'LL LET THEM DECIDE YOUR FATE.
IN THAT CASE, I ACCEPT YOUR GENEROUS OFFER.
WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

BLACKSPORE SWAMP.
I DON'T THINK I'M EVER GOING TO GET THIS SMELL OUT OF MY CLOTHES.
I DOUBT THAT SHIRT IS GOING TO SMELL MUCH DIFFERENT THAN IT USUALLY DOES.
WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU WASHED IT?
I DON'T KNOW--LAST WEEK?
PLEASE DON'T TELL ME THAT WE'RE LOST AGAIN.
OKAY, WE'RE NOT LOST. I JUST DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE.
HOW HARD IS IT TO FOLLOW A SIMPLE MAP?
IT'S NOT LIKE THERE ARE ANY BILLBOARDS POINTING THE WAY TO EGGERT'S SHOP, MUCH LESS A ROAD, OR EVEN A SIDEWALK FOR THAT MATTER.
BUT SINCE YOU THINK IT'S SO EASY, I'LL LET YOU LEAD THE WAY FOR A WHILE.

SSSSS

HEADS UP!

LOOK, I'M SORRY.
WHATEVER.
I KNOW I CAN BE A LITTLE HARD ON YOU SOMETIMES...
REALLY? I HARDLY NOTICED.
SO WHICH WAY ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GO?
KER PLUNK!


YOU DON'T THINK THAT DARKTHORNE SENT US INTO A TRAP, DO YOU?
SPSSSSH
SPSSSSH
BECAUSE IF SHE DID...
WHY DON'T WE ASK HER WHEN WE DELIVER THE ANTIDOTE. IN THE MEANTIME...

FreeRealms™

CLAIM YOUR REWARD!

NEW ACCOUNTS

1. GO TO THE ***FREE REALMS*** WEBSITE - HTTP://WWW.FREEREALMS.COM
2. ENTER THE CODE INTO THE TEXT FIELD IN THE "REDEEM-A-CODE" BOX ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE OF THE HOME PAGE
3. CLICK THE GREEN "GO!" BUTTON
4. THESE CODES WORK WITH NEW AND EXISTING ACCOUNTS, SO IF YOU'RE A NEW PLAYER YOU'LL HAVE TO CREATE AN ACCOUNT AT THIS POINT IF YOU WANT TO CLAIM THE CODE; ON THE ***FREE REALMS*** LOG IN PAGE, CLICK THE "FIRST TIME HERE? START PLAYING FOR FREE!" HYPERLINK.
5. COMPLETE THE NEW ACCOUNT REGISTRATION
6. THE "CONGRATULATIONS!" SCREEN WILL APPEAR, ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR SUCCESSFUL CODE REDEMPTION AND YOUR RECEIPT OF THE IN-GAME ITEM

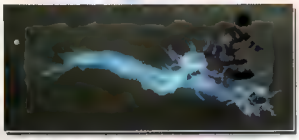
ENTER THIS CODE

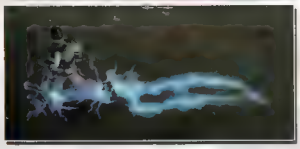
7. CLICK "CONTINUE"
8. YOU'RE IN! NOW CLICK THE SC ICON IN THE GAME DOCK!
9. SELECT THE "CLAIM" BUTTON TO LOAD THE ITEM CLAIM SCREEN
10. YOU'LL SEE THE LIGHTNING FEET ITEM IN YOUR PENDING CLAIMS. SELECT IT BY RUNNING THE CURSOR OVER IT AND LEFT-CLICKING, THEN CLICKING ON THE GREEN "CLAIM" BUTTON ON THE RIGHT!
11. ENJOY YOUR LIGHTNING FEET

EXISTING ACCOUNTS

1. LOG IN AND LAUNCH ***FREE REALMS*** USING THE ACCOUNT AND CHARACTER WHO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE THE REWARD.
2. SELECT THE SC ICON ON THE GAME DOCK
3. SELECT THE "CLAIM" BUTTON TO LOAD THE ITEMS CLAIM SCREEN
4. ENTER THE CODE INTO THE TEXT FIELD IN THE "REDEEM-A-CODE" BOX ON THE TOP OF THE WINDOW
5. YOU'LL SEE THE *LIGHTNING FEET* ITEM IN YOUR PENDING CLAIMS. SELECT IT BY RUNNING THE CURSOR OVER IT AND LEFT-CLICKING, THEN CLICKING ON THE GREEN "CLAIM" BUTTON ON THE RIGHT!
6. ENJOY YOUR *LIGHTNING FEET*

LIGHTNING FEET





THE STORM FRONT

Favorite book of 2009? WILDCATS. WildStorm's rich sandbox of characters brought to life with obvious love by Christos Gage and Neil Googe—the first two arcs are a fun time for any comics fan. Majestic, Savant, the M.I.R.V., the Nevada Garden, Kindred, Yon Kohl, Lord Defile and his Daemonites and even the Church of Gort all popped up in the title and have their moment in the sun again before their story goes out with a bang in the HALO building.

Continuing his love for all things WildStorm, Christos Gage finished his epic WILDCATS run with Shawn Moll and brings in Team 7, Void, Tao and a personal favorite of mine, Max Faraday. The icing on top are Ryan Sook's colorfully iconic covers.

This year's Honorable Mention goes to NORTH 40 by Aaron Williams and Fiona Staples. It's a raw, compelling look at a small, rural town that just happens to have monsters living there, too. Both creators are not only turning in top-notch quality work, they're turning heads with their character portrayals and sense of Lovecraftian horror. It's always rewarding to see a title grab hold of its audience and never let go.

What title am I most looking forward to in 2010? DV8 is an early favorite. Brian Wood has been has been pitching this title for years now, each time refining his take on WildStorm's often misunderstood adolescents, so you know it comes from a genuine love of the characters. I'm also excited to see Rebekah Isaacs become a fan-favorite as she makes her WildStorm debut on this eight-issue miniseries. All that to love–plus, covers beautifully drawn by Fiona Staples and distinctly designed by Brian Wood!

And of course, you can check future WildStorm favorites every month back here at the Storm Front!

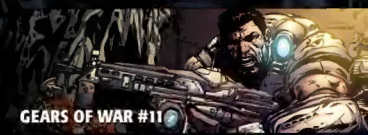
Best,

JIM LEE

OUT THIS MONTH!

ASTRO CITY: THE DARK AGE BOOK 4 #1

THE AUTHORITY: THE LOST YEAR #5



GEARS OF WAR #11

VICTORIAN UNDEAD #3

SUPERNATURAL: BEGINNING'S END #1

COLLECTED EDITIONS:
WILDSTORM: AFTER THE FALL TPB

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THE AUTHORITY #18
THE AUTHORITY: THE LOST YEAR #5
DANTE'S INFERNO #2
FREE REALMS #5
GEARS OF WAR #11
RED HERRING #6
STARCRAFT #7
SUPERNATURAL: BEGINNING'S END #1
VICTORIAN UNDEAD #3
WILDCATS #19

For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at wildstorm.com

NEXT ISSUE: FREE REALMS #6

CARE TO DANCE?
I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK.
ZZZING!
I WAS THINKING, MAYBE THESE NINJAS WANT TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THEIR LAIR AND MAKE YOU THEIR QUEEN.

I THOUGHT THAT WAS *YOUR* PLAN.
YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE.
LUCKY ME.
NOW LET'S FINISH THESE GUYS.

FWOOOOOM

YOU KNOW WHAT? THAT WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE?
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
MAYBE JUST A LITTLE.

I DON'T SUPPOSE HE'S A FRIEND OF YOURS, IS HE?
NOT THAT I KNOW OF.

DO YOU HAVE MY GIFT FROM DARKTHORNE?
To be continued...